



Billing Code 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 622

[Docket No. 001005281-0369-02]

RIN 0648-XA974

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic;
Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and
South Atlantic; Trip Limit Increase

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National
Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Temporary rule; inseason trip limit increase.

SUMMARY: NMFS increases the trip limit in the commercial sector
for king mackerel in the Florida east coast subzone to 75 fish
per day in or from the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). This trip
limit increase is necessary to maximize the socioeconomic
benefits of the quota.

DATES: This rule is effective 12:01 a.m., local time, February
1, 2012, through March 31, 2012, unless changed by further
notification in the Federal Register.

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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The fishery for coastal migratory pelagic fish (king mackerel, Spanish mackerel and cobia) is managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic (FMP). The FMP was prepared by the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils (Councils) and is implemented under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) by regulations at 50 CFR part 622.

Based on the Councils' recommended total allowable catch and the allocation ratios in the FMP, on April 30, 2001 (66 FR 17368, March 30, 2001), NMFS implemented a commercial quota of 2.25 million lb (1.02 million kg) for the eastern zone (Florida) of the Gulf migratory group of king mackerel. That quota is further divided into separate quotas for the Florida east coast subzone and the northern and southern Florida west coast subzones. The quota implemented for the Florida east coast subzone is 1,040,625 lb (472,020 kg) (50 CFR 622.42(c)(1)(i)(A)(1)).

In accordance with 50 CFR 622.44(a)(2)(i)(B)(2), beginning on February 1, if less than 75 percent of the Florida east coast subzone quota has been harvested by that date, king mackerel in or from that subzone may be possessed on board or landed from a

permitted vessel in amounts not exceeding 75 fish per day. The 75-fish daily trip limit will continue until a closure of the subzone's fishery has been effected or the fishing year ends on March 31.

NMFS has determined that 75 percent of the quota for Gulf group king mackerel in the Florida east coast subzone will not be reached before February 1, 2012. Accordingly, a 75-fish trip limit applies to vessels in this fishery for king mackerel in or from the EEZ in the Florida east coast subzone effective 12:01 a.m., local time, February 1, 2012. The 75-fish trip limit will remain in effect until the fishery closes or until the end of the current fishing season (March 31, 2012) for this subzone. From November 1 through March 31, the Florida east coast subzone of the Gulf group king mackerel is that part of the eastern zone north of 25°20.4' N. lat. (a line directly east from the Miami-Dade County, FL, boundary).

Classification

This action responds to the best available information recently obtained from the fishery. The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, (AA) finds good cause to waive the requirement to provide prior notice and opportunity for public comment pursuant to the authority set forth in 5 U.S.C. 553(b) (B), as such prior notice and opportunity for public

comment is unnecessary and contrary to the public interest. Such procedures are unnecessary because the rule itself already has been subject to notice and comment, and all that remains is to notify the public of the trip limit increase. Allowing prior notice and opportunity for public comment for this trip limit increase is contrary to the public interest because it requires time, thus delaying fishermen's ability to catch more king mackerel than the present trip limit allows and preventing fishermen from reaping the socioeconomic benefits derived from this increase in daily catch.

As this action allows fishermen to increase their harvest of king mackerel from 50 fish to 75 fish per day in or from the EEZ of the Florida east coast subzone, the AA finds it relieves a restriction and may go into effect on its effective date pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(1). This action is taken under 50 CFR 622.43(a) and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

Dated: January 31, 2012.

Steven Thur,
Acting Director,
Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

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